

By Sarah Bleau

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Lonnie King, Jr., remembers Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a man who could articulate the hopes, dreams and aspirations people had for the future

ALBANY, GA -- Lonnie King, Jr., a founding member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), remembers Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a man who could articulate the hopes, dreams and aspirations people had for the future.

"And he was able to demonstrate in Montgomery that with concerted organizing and concerted action you can bring about change," says King.

Many came to celebrate that change Dr. King helped bring to the country at the King 2011 Celebration, themed "Remember, Celebrate, Act."

"We're just looking forward to a great and grand occasion for all the wonderful attributes he's given to us in our city," says Allen Shines who attended the event.

It was Dr. King's humble demeanor that King says attracted so many.

"He could speak in such a way that the most intellectual person would understand him as well as the less formally educated person. He has a way of talking to you," says King.

Lonnie King says Dr. King was a bright man whose light was dimmed too early when he was assassinated. But many here tonight are reigniting that light as they celebrate and continue to act on his dream.

"The wonderful thing is that we have a lot of people in our communities across the country are recognizing that we have to come together across all the artificial barriers that separate us," says Congressman Sanford Bishop who attended the celebration. Attendees say the fight for freedom was not for just one race.

"He (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) was not only for blacks but for whites as well. People who were deprived down through the ages, they all had the opportunity to learn what it's about, what freedom is all about," says Shines.

At the end of the night, referring to Dr. King's dream, King asked, are we there yet?

"I believe for the most part it is, but I still feel Albany has a long way to go to completely fulfill his dream," says Simone Collins who attended the event.

King says after looking at the diverse audience in attendance, we're close, but there's still a lot left to be done.

He says two areas that need the most work are the educational system and the prison system. King says more of the African American population is in jail. He says students should be punished by principals instead of being sent to resource centers then prison.

"We need to find a way to come together, black or white, rich or poor, to work on this problem because if you don't work on this education system, you will be a relic in 20 years," King says. "It's time now to act because your great, great grandchildren depend on it."

King says since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, more African Americans are filling jobs in the workplace, but adds that he hopes those serving in our country are serving like Dr. King: Humble and not arrogant.